

METRO & OBITUARIES

LARRY-DOUGLAS EMBURY

At Fox, a 'flashy kind of performer'

Organist will be remembered for playing 'Mighty Mo.'

By Tyler Estep
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Larry-Douglas Embury had a penchant for panache.

He favored sequined tuxedos and bright red shoes, welcoming regular Fox Theatre guests with a smile and a first name. He knew wielding the power of "Mighty Mo," the venue's massive, iconic organ, was a musician's dream. And he enjoyed every second of it.

"He was a very flashy kind of performer," Fox Theatre President and CEO Allan Vella said Saturday.

Embury, the Fox's organist in residence since 2002, died Friday at his home. His age was unknown.

Embury began playing music at age 4, when his father – a "barn fiddler" in their native Canada, according to Embury's website – sold the family car to buy a piano. He per-



Larry-Douglas Embury, shown Dec. 1, 2006, played the Fox Theatre's "Mighty Mo" organ. He had been the Fox's organist in residence since 2002. He died Friday.

formed his first public solo at age 10, and his organ lessons began in earnest three years later.

He had stops throughout the years in San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City, opening for acts like Bette Midler and Tony Curtis. He first played at The Fox in 2002.

After that 90-minute appearance, Embury was

asked to play for the theater's summer film festival. He gave a solo concert that fall – and was subsequently asked to become the Fox's permanent organist in residence.

For the better part of 14 years, he entertained patrons before and after Broadway shows and classical performances,

bringing golden "Mighty Mo" – custom-made in 1929 by namesake M.P. Moller – roaring to life. But he most enjoyed playing as part of the orchestra during a performance of "The Sound of Music," he told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution in 2013.

"I played the theme when Maria gets married, and it was really

thrilling," he said. "The next night, the conductor asked me if I could play it louder, and I told him, 'I could peel the graffiti off the wall in the men's room if you want.' I did, and it was amazing."

Members of the theater and music communities took to social media to express their condolences Saturday.

"RIP Larry Douglas Embury," Broadway in Atlanta tweeted. "We always enjoyed the magic he brought to The Fox Theatre before each performance."

Organist Matthew Kaminski, best known for plying his wares at Atlanta Braves games, called Embury "the Fox Theatre organist that was kind enough to show me the 'Mighty Mo' and was always a pleasure to see."

Vella, the Fox's president, said Saturday the theater's organ tradition will continue – but added it was too early to think about finding a permanent replacement for Embury.

"Larry was definitely a member of the family," he said.